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On Other Pages

Dutch Reformed Church Withdraws from World Council	2
Church-State Friction Continues in Hungary, Poland	4
Inter-Church Talks Attacked in Sweden	5
Kenya, Tanganyika Church Merger Consultation Planned	6
Formosa Presbyterian Near Membership Goal	8
University "Conscience Clause" Annulment Opposed	9
In Brief	10
Document	11



EMBARGO: The Pentecost message is for release after April 2 (Easter) and before May 21, 1961 (Pentecost or Whitsunday).

WCC ISSUES 1961
PENTECOST MESSAGE

(Geneva) - "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World" is the theme of the annual Pentecost message issued by the presidents of the World Council of Churches. Pentecost Sunday falls on May 21 this year.

The theme is the same as that of the Council's third world assembly which will be held in New Delhi, India, from November 18 to December 6. The message distributed to the World Council of Churches' 178 Anglican, Orthodox, and Protestant members says that "At the centre of our deliberations will be the absorbing purpose of agreeing upon our common Christian task".

The message is signed by the World Council's five presidents. They are: Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri, Methodist Church, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Bishop Otto Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin and Brandenburg, Evangelical Church in Germany; Archbishop Iakovos, Greek Orthodox, New York, USA, Metropolitan Mar Thoma Juhanon, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Tiruvella, India; and the Rt. Rev. Henry Knox Sherrill, Protestant Episcopal Church, Boxford, Mass. Dr. John Baillie of the Church of Scotland, the Council's sixth president, died last fall.

"This is an opportunity to demonstrate that this great light 'already shines' and that it dispels the darkness in and around us. For it is in the unity of living, praying, working, speaking together that the churches must show their desire and readiness to reflect the one Light of the World. And all congregations can participate in this by their study of the Bible and their prayer in relation to the Assembly themes," the message declares.

The World Council presidents call attention to St. Peter's sermon at the first Pentecost in which he stressed the power of the Holy Spirit to transform believers into witnesses. "Thus at the very beginning it becomes clear that the Church in history is by its very nature a company of men and women who are called to render witness to God's act of salvation in Christ.

"Today we need this reminder about the central task of the Church. A world of conflict and darkness, in which there is so much lack of clear purpose and real hope, needs to hear the message of reconciliation and : renewal of life with which the Church began on Pentecost. It needs a Church which witnesses to the present activity of the Holy Spirit by its peace-making, its concern for man and need, its evangelism, and by manifesting its God-given unity."

Pentecost or Whitsunday is observed by many churches as a day to stress the witness and wholeness of the Church of Christ. It comes fifty days after Easter and commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit to 120 believers gathered in Jerusalem after the resurrection. It is described in the second chapter of Acts.

(See Document appended for full text of the 1961 Pentecost message from the World Council of Churches' presidents.) EPS, Geneva.

Dutch Reformed Church Withdraws from World Council

(Geneva) - The Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (Hervormde Kerk van Afrika) has decided at its Synod on March 21 to withdraw from the World Council of Churches.

Delegates of this church had participated in the consultation of World Council member churches in December in Johannesburg, but had not subscribed to the statement adopted by more than eighty percent of the delegates present.

The Hervormde Kerk is one of the smaller Dutch Reformed Churches and not one of the federated Dutch Reformed Churches. Its constitution states that white members only can belong to the church. The Johannesburg consultation had stated that "no one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour or his race".

However, an active minority in the Hervormde Kerk has constantly protested against the racial exclusiveness of their church. Several of the contributors to the much discussed book "Delayed Action" with its strong emphasis on a fully ecumenical concept of the Church and its repudiation of racial exclusiveness belong to the Hervormde Kerk.

In the meantime another church in South Africa, the Moravian Church in the Western Cape Province, including white and non-white members, has applied for membership. The church's history goes back to the time of the missionary pioneering of German Moravians in the 18th century. It has 10,500 adult members, and six European and 20 Coloured ministers and maintains a theology seminary. It became independent on June 1, 1960. EPS, Geneva.

Episcopalians To Consider Inter-Communion with Three Churches

(New York) - Full intercommunion between the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA and three overseas churches which split from the Roman Catholic Church around the turn of the century will be recommended to the Church's General Convention when it meets in September.

Dr. Charles D. Kean, of Washington, D.C., secretary of the Convention's Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity, said the group will urge "mutual recognition and reciprocity" with the Philippine Independent Church, the Spanish Reformed Church and the Lusitanian Church in Portugal.

This would mean that clergymen of each church would be permitted to celebrate Holy Communion at each others' altars, and members of each body could receive sacraments from the others' clergy. EPS, Geneva.

Stable Labour System Sought for Nairobi

(Nairobi) - The Nairobi Government is currently seeking to lead the area from relying on migrant workers for industry to the establishment of a state labour system.

This point was made clear by R. E. Luyt, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Labour, in an address to the All-Africa Conference on the Mission of the Church in Urban Africa.

Co-sponsored by the International Missionary Council and the All-Africa Church Conference, the consultation was held in the belief that one of the greatest challenges facing the church in Africa is in the fast-growing, crucial urban areas.

Mr. Luyt told delegates that three things are essential if a stable labour system is to be established. The minimum wage must be adequate for a man to support his family; adequate housing must be available; and social security must be provided for those who leave rural areas for work in urban communities.

At the same time, Mr. Luyt pointed out that the Government has a duty to develop agriculture and to stop the drift from farm areas. "We must make them feel that it is worthwhile for them to stay in agriculture," he said.


The government official disclosed that more than a third of those who have applied for work at labour exchanges had never held jobs before. He noted that unemployment among young people was "quite alarmingly big".

Conference delegates aimed at spotlighting points of need in urban work and at sharing experiences and insights. Main consultant was the Rev. Emerson Smith of Chicago, who was "lent" by the Board of Christian Social Concerns of The Methodist Church in the United States.

EPS, Geneva.

Vietnam Bars Missionaries

(Saigon) - A fifty year period of unrestricted entry by Protestant missionaries into Vietnam has come to an end, according to a report published by the Far East News Service.



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The service reports that new missionaries of the Southern Baptist and the Mennonite churches and of the Wycliffe Translators and Worldwide Evangelization Crusade have been denied entry visas. Further, it said, veteran missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance presently on furlough will not be permitted to return to their work.

Reasons for the government's action are unclear. According to one report the curtailment is due to internal unrest and dangers resulting from Communist rebel activity. Another rumour, FENS said, is that "influential government officials of another religious faith contend that the strength of the national Protestant church indicates there is no further need for foreign missionaries".

EPS, Geneva.

Church-State Friction Continues in Hungary, Poland

(Vienna) - The Roman Catholic episcopate in Hungary has reportedly expressed grave concern over the alleged anti-state activities of some priests who have been arrested by the government, according to the Hungarian news agency.

Informed of the detention of some members of the clergy, the news agency reported that the Hungarian bishops have issued a declaration reminding priests of the existing church-state agreement, and demanding their loyalty to the regime.

While the Catholic hierarchy of Poland has become embroiled in an intense controversy with the government, the Hungarian episcopate has expressed its loyalty to the "convention signed between the church and the state in 1950," and viewed any actions directed against the security of the government "as a crime against the Hungarian people". (See EPS No.12)

The episcopate informed the clergy that any church representative who conspired against the government, or violated existing laws, were harming the interests of the church as well, the report stated.

The bishops' declaration further regretted that the majority of persons detained or arrested, "in spite of repeated gestures of good will and tolerance on the part of the government, had given "new cause to be sentenced again".

"It is inadmissible that irresponsible elements should make use of the Catholic Church, under whatever form, for political ends opposed to the state," the report quoted the bishops as saying;

"The bench of Hungarian bishops is firmly resolved to deal severely in the future with those members of the clergy who abuse their mission by infringing the laws of the state and the Catholic church," they were further quoted as saying.

In Warsaw, meanwhile, Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, Catholic Primate of Poland, continued his clash with government officials in a Palm Sunday sermon heard by some 800 persons.

Cardinal Wyszynski warned Catholics against the forces that are "hunting down God in our souls and destroying traces of His existence in our personal lives".

"At every step," he said, "we are exposed to the denial of God... We are continuously placed in circumstances where it is easier for one's self to keep silent or to flee than to profess belief in God."

A pastoral letter, drafted by the Polish episcopate, was to be read from all pulpits on Palm and Easter Sundays. While high church sources refused to divulge the contents of the message, they left no doubt that the document clearly deals with church-state differences.

Some observers pointed out that the declaration by the Hungarian episcopate is the strongest support that any Roman Catholic hierarchy has given to a Communist government in recent years. EPS, Geneva.

Inter-Church Talks Attacked in Sweden

(Stockholm) - The forthcoming talks on intercommunion between the Church of Sweden and the Church of Scotland have been strongly criticised in a leading article in Svensk Pastoraltidskrift, a Swedish church weekly. (See EPS No. 9)

The article contends that the Swedish delegation represents only a minority of the Swedish church and that as a result "its power to come to any solution that shall be acceptable to the Church as a whole has been jeopardized at the outset". It declared:

"The unavoidable impression is created that its purpose is to dodge the opposition, and to trump a way through to an agreement on inter-communion with the strongly Calvinistic Scottish Church, an agreement which would be widely held by our theologians and church people to be opposed to our confession and to all sound ecumenical principles".

The talks also drew fire last week from the Working Committee of the Swedish Church Union. A statement issued by the Union declared intercommunion between the two churches "would seem to us to be in direct conflict with Swedish Church law and confession".

It said that negotiations for intercommunion had not been presented to the Church and that "no official agreement has been reached". If such an agreement were reached, it said, it would result in "a further intensification of the strife within the Swedish Church" and as far as ecumenical relations with the Anglican Church are concerned "in England and Scotland, 'would bring serious difficulties in its train'". EPS, Geneva.

Easing of Australian Immigration Policy Seen

(Sydney) - A limited easing of Australia's immigration policy in regard to admission of Asians can be seen in the present administration of immigration policy, according to the Australian Council of Churches.

The Council at its recent annual meeting resolved to thank the Government for this easing and to urge it to go further. The Council also asked the Government to clarify to the public the principles on which it operates its immigration policy.

The Rt. Rev. J.S. Moyes (Bishop of Armidale) moving the motion, pointed out that the Government had made no public statement concerning a change of policy.

The motion "acknowledges with gratitude the liberalising of the policy," and urges the government "to continue this liberalizing process, particularly in cases of special hardship".

It further urges "the vital need to remove from the policy all remaining indications of attitude of racial superiority and discrimination". EPS, Geneva.

Capital Punishment Ban Sought by Philadelphia Presbytery

(Philadelphia) - The Pennsylvania Legislature (USA) has been urged to abolish capital punishment in the state.

The request has come from the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which represents about 200 United Presbyterian churches. The resolution was adopted by a narrow vote of 135 to 123.

The resolution called upon the church to "seek protection of society and the redemption of evil doers; not vengeance nor retribution". It also warned that the death penalty carried with it "the possibility of a miscarriage of justice and execution of innocent parties".

The 1959 United Presbyterian General Assembly, the denomination's highest court, went on record as opposing capital punishment in any state. Similar opposition was recently voiced in a study paper published by the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church for distribution to dioceses throughout the country. (See EPS No. 12).

The Methodist General Convention, the Church of the Brethren, and the Society of Friends (Quakers), are among other Protestant bodies which have also urged an end to the death penalty. However, the United Lutheran Church of America last October rejected a resolution aimed at the abolition of capital punishment.

Roman Catholics generally support the church's teaching that the state has the right to inflict such punishment on persons found guilty of serious crimes against a just social order and the rights of individuals.

EPS, Geneva.

Kenya, Tanganyika Church Merger Consultation Planned

(Kampala, Uganda) - A consultation will be held early next year at Limuru near here to discuss the possibility of establishing a united church of Kenya and Tanganyika.

In disclosing plans for the meeting, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa revealed that Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian leaders have agreed to attend the conference to which representatives of other denominations will also be invited.

The General Assembly, in a resolution endorsing the proposal, observed that "the time is now ripe to examine" divisions in the church in Kenya and Tanganyika to "discover whereby Christian unity may be attained".

"We remember that the Church of Christ in the world is called to exercise a ministry of reconciliation," the resolution declared, "and we believe that a divided church is not able to heal the wounds of a divided world".

EPS, Geneva.

Catholic Scholars Hail New English Bible

(London) - A prominent English Jesuit has raised the possibility that the New English Bible, the undertaking of an interdenominational group of Biblical scholars, could serve as the basis of an agreed Biblical text acceptable to both Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Father Thomas Corbishley, superior of London's famous Farm Street Church and a former rector of Campion Hall at Oxford University, said such "a Bible in common would be a most useful instrument in the business of promoting unity between all Christians".

While he pointed out that some details of the new translation "undoubtedly would have to be modified in the light of Catholic sentiment," Father Corbishley commented:

"Broadly speaking, it is safe to say that the new translation, based as it is on strict scholarship and not seeking to be 'the expression of any denominational or doctrinal leaning,' could at least serve as a basis for an agreed text."

He praised the new translation as being "vigorous, forthright, admirably clear and with a dignity of its own," and predicted that it "should go a long way toward achieving its purpose of reviving interest in the Bible among those who have come to think of it as 'dated'".

In Boston, meanwhile, another Roman Catholic scholar, the Rev. Philip J. King, said the new translation "affords us an opportunity to salute our Protestant brothers who have made such outstanding contributions to the field of sacred scripture".

Father King, a professor of sacred scripture at Boston's St. John's Seminary, noted that Protestant and Catholic scholars collaborate in archaeological projects, the deciphering of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in critical comparison and research in Biblical manuscripts.

"All this demonstrates that the Bible is the natural bond uniting Catholics and non-Catholics," he said.

The London Sunday Times commented that the New English Bible "will almost certainly be discussed" at the Second Vatican (Ecumenical) Council, and ventured that "a move for its acceptance by the Roman Catholic Church may be made shortly afterwards".

Pointing out that efforts have been made for a common text in the United States and Holland, The Sunday Times added:

"A strong body of Roman Catholic scholars is anxious for a translation acceptable to all denominations and some feel that the latest version could provide the necessary basis."

At the same time, Professor C. H. Dodd, chairman of the panel responsible for translating the New English Bible, was quoted by The Sunday Times as saying: "Any request to modify any part of the translation to suit Roman Catholic sentiment would have to be gone into very thoroughly before making any kind of decision".

Other Catholic spokesmen suggested that there was little likelihood that the New English Bible would become the basis of a text acceptable to Catholics. One spokesman noted that Catholics already have the "excellent" translation made by the late Msgr. Ronald A. Knox with the authorization of the hierarchy in England and Wales. EPS, Geneva.

Formosa Presbyterians Near Membership Goal

(Taipei) - The campaign to double the membership of the Presbyterian Church of Formosa, which was started in 1954 and expected to take until 1965, is almost completed, according to the Rev. W. T. Whang, general secretary of the church.

Today the church has 747 congregations and preaching places, as compared with just over 400 in 1954. Current membership numbers 55,000 adult communicants, and a total church community of 160,000 persons. The church also has two seminaries and two Bible schools with combined enrollments of 500 students.

"Our aim now," Mr. Whang has reported, "is to increase the number of congregations to 1,000 and the church community to 240,000 persons by 1965." The figure would be about two percent of the estimated population of the Island that year.

(The combined membership of all other Protestant groups on the Island, all of which have started work since the end of World War II, is 100,000. The Roman Catholic membership is estimated at 200,000. The Presbyterian church membership represents about three-fifths of all the Protestants and about one-sixth of the Island's Christians.)

Mr. Whang stressed that the church, which is the only church on the Island which belongs to the World Council of Churches and the East Asian Christian Conference, has greatly valued its fellowship in the ecumenical movement. Noting that it had given funds in response to the WCC's recent appeal for East Pakistan flood victims, he said the gift was the direct result of its appreciation for the help received from churches in other parts of the world at the time of its own flood disasters. EPS, Geneva.

Lutheran Laymen Organize "Peace Corps" Programme

(Minneapolis) - A new Lutheran laymen's "Peace Corps"; known as World Brotherhood Exchange, is attempting to recruit professional men and women, skilled workers and students to serve abroad as part-time missionaries at their own expense.

The Rev. Conrad Braaten of Los Angeles, the executive director, said 14 dentists in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area have volunteered to serve three months every two years in mission clinics or dispensaries.

Mr. Braaten said the church-related exchange, the theme of which is "I am my brother's keeper", is seeking three types of recruits:

One - Retired, semi-retired or otherwise financially-solvent farmers, engineers, teachers, architects, builders, physicians, dentists and nurses to serve for one or more years in underdeveloped areas.

Two - Practicing physicians, surgeons and dentists to serve two or three months abroad at a clinic or dispensary every two years.

Three - Students to enroll at universities in India and other underdeveloped countries where English is the medium of instruction to form "Christian cells" which would counteract anti-Christian propaganda.

Mr. Braaten said all applicants will be screened for dedication, motivation and respect for customs and traditions of others. They will work only in areas where indigenous churches exist to demonstrate that they are "arms" of these churches and are serving through "Christian love and compassion".

The exchange is also seeking "world brothers," - persons who are willing to pledge \$100 a year for 10 years to support the organization, Mr. Braaten said. Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal insurance society with headquarters here, and four individuals have already contributed \$18,000 to help launch the project.

Although leaders of the exchange are affiliated with the new American Lutheran Church, the organization is being broadened to include Lutherans of other bodies and members of other denominations, he added.

EPS, Geneva.

University "Conscience Clause" Annulment Opposed

(Pretoria) - A parliamentary proposal to annul the so-called "conscience clause" in the appointment of faculty members at the University of the Orange Free State has drawn the opposition of religious leaders in South Africa.

Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders have expressed the opinion that the door would be left wide open to religious discrimination if the bill is approved, since the "conscience clause" prohibits religious considerations entering into the appointment of teachers.

The Christian Council of South Africa, representing 27 Protestant denominations and missionary bodies, has come out strongly against the proposal.

Also opposing the bill is Roman Catholic Archbishop Owen McCann of Capetown, who has contended that the amendment would create "exceptional circumstances" for Catholics and Jews who apply for university teaching posts.

To give preference to Protestant professors on the grounds that Protestantism is the dominant religion of the area, he said, is not permissible since the university is neither a private organization nor a religious institution, but rather a public establishment supported by public funds.

Support of the annulment proposal has been extended by the Dutch Reformed Church of the Orange Free State, among other groups.

EPS, Geneva.

Bishop Sees Improved East German Church-State Relations

(Berlin) - The Bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Province of Saxony in East Germany has observed friendly advances and a more tolerant attitude on the part of the East German Government towards the church since last October.

Bishop Johannes Jänicke of Magdeburg, in a report to the church's recent synod meeting in Halle, said that satisfactory agreements on several important questions have been reached between authorities and church leaders.

"There has been an obvious attempt to establish good relations with the church," said the bishop, "and it has been very helpful".

Although such discussions cannot always be made public, he added, church leaders are continually meeting with government officials on matters relating to the church.

However, Bishop Jänicke's statement was somewhat marred by the announcement of the seizure of three church newspapers intended for reading by East German Protestants.

According to reports here, East German authorities seized the March 19th issues of the Berlin Sunday newspaper, The Church, as well as The Mecklenburg Church Newspaper and The Potsdam Church, because they contained a statement by officials of Kirchentag announcing their intention to hold the next German Church Day Congress in Berlin as originally planned.

East German newspapers have charged that Kirchentag officials had rejected the government's offer to hold the congress in Leipzig solely "for the sake of a few NATO theologians and in order to increase tensions in and around Berlin". (See EPS No.5, 11,12) EPS, Geneva.

In Brief

Four-month evangelistic crusades in 92 Southern Baptist (US) churches and missions in Cuba brought 5,166 conversions, according to a report of the denomination's Home Mission Board. (See Special Report EPS 10)

* * *

Dr. J. D. Hughey has been inaugurated as president of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüschlikon, Switzerland. Dr. Hughey has been acting Seminary president since September, 1960, and a member of its faculty since 1952. The Seminary is sponsored by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, USA., in cooperation with various European Baptist Unions. Students from Europe form the majority of the student body, but others come from the Near East, Africa, Asia and the United States. The Seminary offers courses leading to the B.D. and Th. M. degrees.

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The Norwegian YMCA/YWCA have quipped a small exhibition ship which is voyaging along the coast of Norway, calling at seacoast towns and villages with compact displays of the life and work of the two movements in Norway and in twenty other countries. In several areas arrangement have been made to hold classes on board for local school children.

* * *

Five Christian groups in the Embu district of Kenya have joined to form a YMCA/YWCA. Sixty-two youth were admitted as members at the first service. EPS, Geneva.

NOTE TO EPS READERS

There will be no issue of EPS next week. The next issue will be dated April 14th.

DocumentPENTECOST 1961A Message from the Presidents of the
World Council of Churches

The keynote of St. Peter's Pentecost sermon, the first sermon of the Church of Christ, is: "This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses". Peter thus gives evidence of the fulfilment of Christ's promise that His disciples would receive the Holy Spirit and be enabled to proclaim the good news to the ends of the earth. The disciples, so slow to understand and to believe, have been transformed by the Spirit into men who speak boldly and convincingly of "the mighty works of God" manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Thus at the very beginning it becomes clear that the Church in history is by its very nature a company of men and women who are all called to render witness to God's act of salvation in Christ.

Today we need this reminder about the central task of the Church. A world of conflict and darkness, in which there is so much lack of clear purpose and real hope, needs to hear the message of reconciliation and renewal of life with which the Church began on Pentecost. It needs a Church which witnesses to the present activity of the Holy Spirit by its peace-making, its concern for man and need, its evangelism, and by manifesting its God-given unity.

This year the churches in the World Council prepare for their Assembly in New Delhi. The main theme will be: "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World". At the centre of our deliberations will be the absorbing purpose of agreeing upon our common Christian task. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that this great light "already shines" and that it dispels the darkness in and around us. For it is in the unity of living, praying, working, speaking together that the churches must show their desire and readiness to reflect the one Light of the World. And all congregations can participate in this by their study of the Bible and their prayer in relation to the Assembly themes.

Let us, therefore, all join in praying that the Spirit may inspire and enable us, like Peter, to respond gratefully to Christ's promise by accepting it and committing ourselves to be His witnesses together.

Bishop S.U. Barbieri - Buenos Aires

Bishop Otto Dibelius - Berlin

Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill - Boxford, Mass.

Archbishop Iakovos - New York

Metropolitan Juhanon Mar Thoma

/Tiruvella

A poster or a glossy photo of the 1961 WCC Pentecost poster is available from WCC Information in Geneva. The motif on the poster is derived from the Geneva heraldic device representing the sun in flames surrounding the first three Greek letters of the name of Jesus. It is the seal of the Church of Geneva.

EPS, Geneva.